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Hemingway scholar talks about author's upbringing

BY LILLI KUZMA
For Sun-Times Media

For Hemingway scholar and author Nancy Sindelar there's "no place like home" when it comes to understanding great American writer Ernest Hemingway.

Sindelar's new book, "Influencing Hemingway: People and Places That Shaped His Life and Work" (Rowan & Littlefield, 2014), is a well-researched, fluidly written study on Hemingway and the family roots and upbringing that helped form and influence his life and writings. The book includes rare photographs and excerpts of letters.

The Ernest Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park will host Chicagoan Sindelar for a book signing and presentation Sept. 18 and 24 at the Hemingway Birthplace Home in Oak Park. Sindelar's presentation, "Ernest Hemingway: Early Influences That Shaped His Life and Work," will examine the people and places that influenced Hemingway during his time in Oak Park from birth through high school. The presentation will include a multi-media display, book signing, a tour of the Hemingway home and light refreshments. Admission is free, but registration is required, and openings remain for only the Sept. 24 event.

'ERNEST HEMINGWAY: EARLY INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED HIS LIFE AND WORK'

7 p.m. Sept. 18 (sold out) and Sept. 24

Hemingway Birthplace Home, 339 N. Oak Park Ave., Oak Park

To register, call (708) 524-5383 or see Ehfp.org

"I'll show pictures and letters, and talk about Hemingway's early influences, his parents and grandparents, and his education — I probably have the letters memorized by now!" said Sindelar.

Sindelar's book maintains that Hemingway's family and his experience growing up in Oak Park provided the seeds for his brilliance to emerge and flourish. And while he changed as an adult and didn't live a life his parents always approved of, a strong work ethic was ingrained in him. As Sindelar

notes in her book:

"... the ability to tolerate the lonely life of writing, reflects the disciplined work ethic Ernest learned as a child. The Oak Park homes were places where the focus was on work and service to mankind. Ernest's father did not tolerate just sitting around. His children had to be reading a book, studying or doing something worthwhile. It's not surprising that Ernest developed a code of behavior for life in the modern world because he had grown up with a strict code of behavior."

Sindelar feels it is important to refute claims that Hemingway hated his hometown:

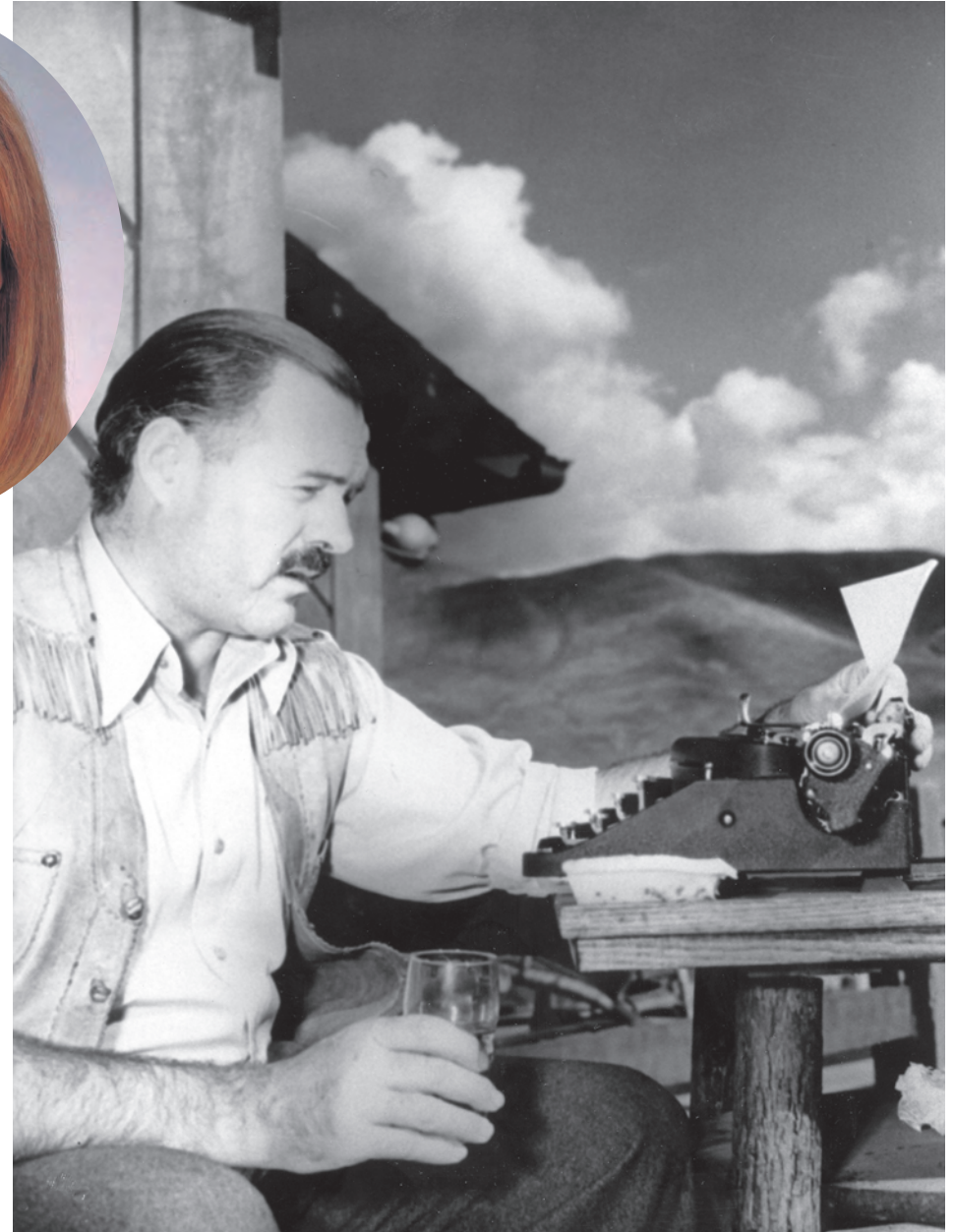
"I really feel that Hemingway has been misinterpreted [about Oak Park], and want to turn this negative feeling about Hemingway's view of Oak Park around, and set the record straight," she said.

Sindelar has established herself as a prominent Hemingway scholar and lecturer. In 2011 and 2013 she was a presenter at the International Colloquium Ernest Hemingway in Havana, Cuba. This past May, Sindelar spoke at the American Literature Association Conference in Washington, D.C., and in June was a speaker at the Hemingway Society Conference in Venice, Italy.

"I don't know that there is another female biographer of Hemingway," she said. "He was a 'man's man' and a lot of people who don't know me will ask, 'Why did you write a book about Hemingway?' Of course it was basically because I was a teacher."

Sindelar taught American Literature for 32 years at Hemingway's alma mater, Oak Park and River Forest High School. She fleshed out Hemingway as a high school student as a way to energize her students.

"I studied Ernest's yearbooks, his high school writing and even met some of his former teachers," Sindelar wrote on her



ABOVE: Ernest Hemingway shown at work in 1939. | AP PHOTO/FILE

INSET: Hemingway author and scholar Nancy Sindelar will speak at the Hemingway Birthplace Home Sept. 18 and 24.

website. "Together my students and I learned that the man who became an international literary figure and sports legend also was an avid reader, a high school athlete, the editor of the school's newspaper, a contributor to the literary magazine

and that he played the cello in the school's orchestra and participated in the school play."

Asked which Hemingway novel is her favorite, Sindelar answered quickly: "The Sun Also Rises."